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INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000678

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A/S CARSON, AF/C
NSC FOR MGAVIN
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: NORTH DARFUR REMAINS CALM FOLLOWING CLASHES

REF: A) KHARTOUM 666

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The situation in North Darfur has remained calm since May 17 clashes between JEM and the GOS at Karnoi, according to UN and rebel sources. Meanwhile, the extent of JEM's presence in Darfur remains unclear. A UNDSS officer told poloff that JEM has retreated into Chad, but UNAMID has received unconfirmed sightings of JEM columns as far east as Hashaba (Northwest of Kutum). There are also a growing number of reports of civilian displacements due to the recent violence. In West Darfur, meanwhile, several hundred Chadian rebels are apparently camped out at Saro, south of Mukjar, and have been observed regularly purchasing food in Mukjar market. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Speaking to poloff on May 21, UN Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS) Officer Francis Sikaonga confirmed that North Darfur remained calm on May 21, with no new clashes between the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) reported. Calling JEM's advance on Karnoi a "hit-and-run," Sikaonga said information from the field concurs with reports from UNDSS colleagues in eastern Chad that JEM has returned to eastern Chad to seek treatment for its wounded fighters. (Note: a May 20 report from UNDSS in Chad confirmed the presence of many JEM vehicles in the vicinity of Bahai, Chad. UNDSS further stated that an additional 30 wounded JEM fighters arrived at Iriba hospital in Chad on May 19, bringing the total number of JEM wounded there to 64. End Note.) On May 21, SLA/AW-aligned commander Suleiman Marajan also told poloff that JEM had retreated to Bahai.

¶3. (SBU) UNDSS reports indicate that neither Karnoi nor Um Barro is occupied by JEM, as Khalil Ibrahim's rebel faction does not have the resources to seize and hold ground in Darfur. UNAMID Chief of Staff John Almstrom confirmed that the instability along the border in North Darfur does not pose a security threat to the visit of Codel Isakson on Tuesday, May 26 to El Fasher. Almstrom agreed with UNDSS's assessment that JEM occupies no locations involved in last week's clashes. He added that JEM has no capacity for a "long haul" from the Chadian border to the North Darfur capital of El Fasher, approximately 300 km away.

¶4. (SBU) UNAMID has yet to send a verification patrol to the Karnoi area due to security concerns, according to UNAMID Political Affairs Officer Hideo Ikebe, but it has continued to receive unconfirmed reports of JEM sightings in North Darfur, including one as far East as Hashaba (approximately 50 kilometers northeast of Kutum.) Khalil Tukras, an El Fasher human rights lawyer and rebel interlocutor, told poloff on May 21 that several JEM columns are present in North Darfur, and that JEM maintains de facto control of most of the area west of Kutum. JEM's incursions have caused civilian displacements, he said, as local Zaghawa in Korno not from the Kobe clan of Khalil Ibrahim are fleeing south.

¶5. (SBU) Speaking to poloff from El Fasher on May 21, SLA/Minnawi

representative Adam Ali Ware said that travelers returning from the Kornoï area reported civilians fleeing there following the March 17 clashes and subsequent overflights of the area by GOS Antonov bombers. Ware also accused JEM Commander (and Minnawi defector) Arko Suleiman Dahia of forcibly driving out resettled civilians from Togai (phonetic), Southeast of Kornoï, back to refugee camps in Chad, in an apparent attempt to restock JEM's recruitment pool in these camps. Ware stated that he expects JEM will resume attacks on SLA/Minnawi, possibly in one of Minnawi's few remaining strongholds south of El Fasher, including Dar es Salaam. He doubted that JEM would attack additional GOS bases, noting that while Kornoï was relatively weak, other GOS encampments are stronger. (Note: outside of Kornoï, other GOS encampments in North Darfur reportedly include from west to east: Tine, Umm Barro, Shegeg Karo, Ana Bagi, Kutum, El Fasher, Mellit, Saya, Kuma and Malha. End Note.)

¶6. (SBU) In Western Darfur, meanwhile, a recent UNAMID verification patrol to Mukjar assessed the security situation there as calm and confirmed the hostile bombings by Chadian airplanes on locations of Chadian rebels in Saro and Ramaila, southwest of Mukjar on May 14-15. No civilian victims of these bombings have been identified. The patrol also found that there were approximately 200 Chadian rebels in Saro, and an unknown number in Ramaila, and on May 17 those in Ramaila withdrew to join the ranks in Saro. UNAMID estimated the rebels to be in possession of approximately 150 vehicles. Chadian rebels in heavily-armed vehicles are apparently a common sight in the Mukjar market, where they are often seen purchasing food.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: While it remains highly capable of hit-and-run attacks, JEM has yet to prove it can hold territory. It appears to have learned a lesson from its disastrous foray into Muhajeriya,

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where its supply lines became stretched so thin that functioning Landcruisers were reported to have been abandoned due to a lack of fuel. The western reaches of North Darfur remain much closer to JEM's base in Um Jaras. JEM may be able to enter SLA/Minnawi and former SLA/Unity territory with ease. However, it will run into difficulties if it moves too far east into Meidob territory, northeast of El Fasher. Recent events and JEM's public statements continue to cast doubt on whether Khalil Ibrahim is either capable or inclined to play a constructive role in the Doha peace process. End comment.

ASQUINO